



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALIEN SMUGGLER PLEADS GUILTY IN FEDERAL COURT

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 24-year-old Manuel Hernandez (a.k.a. Pedro Casas-Chavez) of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, faces between five and 35 years in federal prison after pleading guilty this morning to three counts of alien smuggling for profit.

On November 24, 2004, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and El Paso Police officers responded to call for help from the night clerk at the Red Roof Inn after an injured female sought refuge in the hotel lobby. The female, an El Salvadorian National, subsequently informed authorities that she illegally entered the United States earlier that morning, destined for Maryland. She was charged a smuggling fee of \$3,800. She told authorities that she paid Hernandez \$2,000 in cash as partial payment.

By his guilty plea, Hernandez admitted that he physically assaulted the female at the hotel after she refused his sexual advances then forced her to perform various sexual acts on him. Hernandez remains in federal custody. Sentencing will occur before United States District Judge Philip R. Martinez. No date has been scheduled.

This case was investigated by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Office of Investigations and the El Paso Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney Brandy Gardes is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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